

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

3927 Lennane Drive, Suite #100
Sacramento, CA 95834
916 419-2510

CONTACT: John Carr, Public Information Officer
(916) 419-2525

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ABC CITES CLERKS FOR SELLING ALCOHOL TO MINORS

CITY OF BLYTHE— Investigators of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage conducted a compliance check operation in which minors under the direct supervision of the investigators, attempted to purchase alcohol from retail licensees in the City of Blythe, California. Out of a total of 17 locations, two clerks sold alcohol to the minor decoy.

Those who sell to the minor face a minimum fine of \$250.00 and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first offense. In addition, ABC will take administrative action against the business' liquor license. That may include a fine; suspension or the permanent revocation of the license.

As part of Operation STAR (Statewide Traffic Action Response), the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control is taking a pro-active approach that reduces the risks of young people under 21 years of age. STAR is a statewide effort to increase safety through enforcement and prevention efforts by five departments in California's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, The California Highway Patrol (CHP), ABC, The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the California Office of Traffic Safety, (OTS). Young people have a higher rate of drunk driving fatalities than the general adult population. The minor decoy program is an effective law enforcement tool that generates public safety and awareness. ABC is conducting the compliance checks state-wide to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors.

Minor Decoy Operations have been conducted by local law enforcement throughout the state since the 1980's. When the program first began, the violation rate of retail establishments selling to minors was as high as 40 to 50 percent. When conducted on a routine basis, the rate has dropped in some cities as low as 10 percent or even below. The latest violation rate state-wide is 16 percent.

In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that use of underage decoys is a valid tool of law enforcement to ensure that liquor licensees are complying with the law.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency. ABC is a department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which is under the direction of Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak, a member of the Governor's Cabinet.